In an eternal sense, salvation is a family affair. God holds parents responsible for their stewardship in rearing their family. It is a most sacred responsibility.

Today we are aware of great problems in our society. The most obvious are sexual promiscuity, homosexuality, drug abuse, alcoholism, vandalism, pornography, and violence.

These grave problems are symptoms of failure in the home—the disregarding of principles and practices established by God in the very beginning.

Because some parents have departed from the principles the Lord gave for happiness and success, many families throughout the world are undergoing great stress and trauma. Many parents have been enticed to abandon their responsibilities in the home to seek after an elusive “self-fulfillment.” Some have abdicated parental responsibilities for pursuit of material things, unwilling to postpone personal gratification in the interest of their children’s welfare.

It is time to awaken to the fact that there are deliberate efforts to restructure the family along the lines of humanistic values. Images of the family and of love as depicted in television and film often portray a philosophy contrary to the commandments of God.

Innocent-sounding phrases are now used to give approval to sinful practices. Thus, the term “alternative life-style” is used to justify adultery and homosexuality, “freedom of choice” to justify abortion, “meaningful relationship” and “self-fulfillment” to justify sex outside of marriage.

If we continue with present trends, we can expect to have more emotionally disturbed young people, more divorce, more depression, and more suicide.

The family is the most effective place to instill lasting values in its members. Where family life is strong and based on principles and practices of the gospel of Jesus Christ, these problems do not as readily appear.

My message is to return to the God-ordained fundamentals that will ensure love, stability, and happiness in our homes. May I offer three fundamentals to happy, enduring family relationships.

**First: A husband and wife must attain righteous unity and oneness in their goals, desires, and actions.**

Marriage itself must be regarded as a sacred covenant before God. A married couple have an obligation not only to each other, but to God. He has promised blessings to those who honor that covenant.

Fidelity to one’s marriage vows is absolutely essential for love, trust, and peace. Adultery is unequivocally condemned by the Lord.

Husbands and wives who love each other will find that love and loyalty are reciprocated. This love will provide a nurturing atmosphere for the emotional growth of children. Family life should be a time of happiness and joy that children can look back on with fond memories and associations.

Restraint and self-control must be ruling principles in the marriage relationship. Couples must learn to bridle their tongues as well as their passions.

Prayer in the home and prayer with each other will strengthen your union. Gradually thoughts, aspirations, and ideas will merge into a oneness until you are seeking the same purposes and goals.

Rely on the Lord, the teachings of the prophets, and the scriptures for guidance and help, particularly when there may be disagreements and problems.

Spiritual growth comes by solving problems together—not by running from them. Today’s inordinate emphasis on individualism brings egotism and separation. Two individuals becoming “one flesh” is still the Lord’s standard. (See Gen. 2:24.)

The secret of a happy marriage is to serve God and each other. The goal of marriage is unity and oneness, as well as self-development. Paradoxically, the more we serve one another, the greater is our spiritual and emotional growth.

Second: Nurture your children with love and the admonitions of the Lord.

Rearing happy, peaceful children is no easy challenge in today’s world, but it can be done, and it is being done. Responsible parenthood is the key.

Above all else, children need to know and feel they are loved, wanted, and appreciated. They need to be assured of that often. Obviously, this is a role parents should fill, and most often the mother can do it best.

Children need to know who they are in the eternal sense of their identity. They need to know that they have an eternal Heavenly Father on whom they can rely, to whom they can pray, and from whom they can receive guidance. They need to know from whence they came so that their lives will have meaning and purpose.
Children must be taught to pray, to rely on the Lord for guidance, and to express appreciation for the blessings that are theirs. I recall kneeling at the bedsides of our young children, helping them with their prayers.

Children must be taught right from wrong. They can and must learn the commandments of God. They must be taught that it is wrong to steal, lie, cheat, or covet what others have.

Children must be taught to work at home. They should learn there that honest labor develops dignity and self-respect. They should learn the pleasure of work, of doing a job well.

The leisure time of children must be constructively directed to wholesome, positive pursuits. Too much television viewing can be destructive.

Families must spend more time together in work and recreation. Family home evenings should be scheduled once a week as a time for discussions of gospel principles, recreation, work projects, skits, songs around the piano, games, special refreshments, and family prayers. Like iron links in a chain, this practice will bind a family together, in love, pride, tradition, strength, and loyalty.

Family study of the scriptures should be the practice in our homes each Sabbath day.

Daily devotionals are also a commendable practice, where scripture reading, singing of hymns, and [page 5] family prayer are a part of our daily routine.

**Third: Parents must prepare their children for the ordinances of the gospel.**

The most important teachings in the home are spiritual. Parents are commanded to prepare their sons and daughters for the ordinances of the gospel: baptism, confirmation, priesthood ordinations, and temple marriage. They are to teach them to respect and honor the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Most importantly, parents are to instill within their children a desire for eternal life and to earnestly seek that goal above all else.

Eternal life may be obtained only by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

When parents themselves have complied with the ordinances of salvation, when they have set the example of a temple marriage, not only is their own marriage more likely to succeed, but their children are far more likely to follow their example.

Parents who provide such a home will have, as the Lord has said, “a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, … a house of order, a house of God.” (D&C 88:119.) Regardless of how modest or humble that home may be, it will have love, happiness, peace, and joy. Children will grow up in righteousness and truth and will desire to serve the Lord.

Thank God for the joys of family life. I have often said there can be no genuine happiness separate and apart from a good home. The sweetest influences and associations of life are there.